

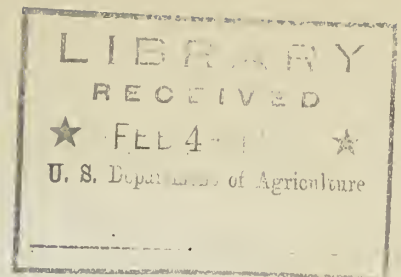
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Modernizing the Farmhouse



A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Ashby, Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, January 16, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: The next voice you'll be hearing today on this program is Ruth Van Deman's. And as you know her voice is synonymous with Household Calendar. Today she has with her Mr. Wallace Ashby of the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, and I take it this is a talk that will interest the men just as much as the women in this audience. So go right ahead, Miss Van Deman, the Farm and Home Hour belongs to you and Mr. Ashby for eight minutes.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Salisbury. Yes, when you begin to talk about modernizing the farmhouse, that certainly is a subject for both men and women. It wouldn't be a modern household if they didn't cooperate on the plans.

When Mr. Ashby first told me he was working up plans for remodeling farmhouses and writing a bulletin about them, I made a date with him then and there for this interview. So the other day when the first copies of his new bulletin called "Modernizing Farmhouses" came from the press, I found a copy on my desk. The smell of the printing press was still clinging to it; the ink was scarcely dry. And here we are at the first opportunity ready to pass the good word along to you in case you're thinking about fixing up an old farmhouse this spring. These days when it rains and snows and blows are just the time to study plans and take measurements and figure costs.

Mr. Ashby, what do you think is the very first thing to be decided in remodeling an old house?

MR. ASHBY: Well, I think the first thing to decide is whether the old house is worth remodeling. It pays to get a competent builder or somebody who understands houses thoroughly to go all over the structure and tell you whether it is sound in its foundations and its framework. Whether the old part will warrant the cost of new materials and labor to bring it up to modern standards of comfort and convenience. If it's an old family homestead or a house to which you are attached for personal reasons, then you may want to go ahead even if it amounts almost to rebuilding.

MISS VAN DEMAN: You simply mean that it's well to know exactly what you are getting into and what the house will be worth in the end, before starting the remodeling.

MR. ASHBY: Yes, that's it.

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right, we'll suppose a family has a farmhouse that is definitely worth modernizing. Then what next?

MR. ASHBY: Well, next, I'd plan on putting in, first, running water in the kitchen, and in a bathroom if possible, and of course plumbing to carry off wastes. Second, a lighting system. From the figures we collected in the farm housing survey we have costs on all these items from pressure water system to kitchen sink.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Of all the modern conveniences in a house, I'd say a kitchen sink is the most convenient.

MR. ASHBY: I agree. That's certainly where I'd start in modernizing a farmhouse. But when I was putting the sink in, I'd be sure to put it in the most convenient and best lighted place, and if necessary change the location of the other equipment. You know, you home economics people have sold me on this idea of grouping the equipment into work centers. The minute I go into a kitchen now or pick up an architect's plan, I begin figuring out the paths of travel a woman must follow in the course of cooking and serving a meal, and whether the arrangement of the equipment allows her to carry on the different jobs easily.

I came across a good illustration of that point in Ohio recently. I stopped at a farmhouse where a new sink had been installed and asked the homemaker how she liked it. She said she was glad to have the sink but she did wish it had been placed as the plan directed, on the other side of the room. Now she has to walk back and forth across the kitchen, she couldn't say how many times a day because the sink is on the wrong side of the room. It was put there to save 12 feet of sewer pipe.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And how much would the 12 feet of pipe have cost?

MR. ASHBY: Oh, about five dollars.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And to save 12 feet of sewer pipe costing about five dollars that Ohio woman has to walk nobody knows how many extra miles a week for the rest of her days.

Now, Mr. Ashby, I see you give in your bulletin pictures and plans of farmhouses that have actually been remodeled in different parts of the country - north, east, south, and west.

MR. ASHBY: Yes, we picked out thirteen that we felt were representative of farmhouses in different sections of the country.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Here's one from South Carolina that looks very interesting.

MR. ASHBY: Yes, that L-shaped three-room type of house is rather common. Living room, bedroom, with kitchen behind the living room. The owner added two more bedrooms behind the kitchen and put a porch around two sides of the house. The disadvantage to this plan is you have to enter one of these bedrooms through the kitchen, and the other from the porch. We drew up another plan, with two new bedrooms and a bath joining the original

house at the bedroom end. This makes a unit of the three bedrooms and leaves the kitchen with two outside walls that permit better light and ventilation, an important point in a kitchen in the South.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And I notice you ran a screened porch from the kitchen across to the bedroom wing.

MR. ASHBY: Yes, that makes a good place for the men to wash without going into the kitchen. And we put in closets, and cupboards, and a pantry, and a heater in the hall off the bedrooms - all at an estimated cost of \$1,325, including the value of the labor. Anybody with this type house to remodel has a choice of these two plans.

Now, jumping from South Carolina to Ohio. Here's a good plan for making over a T-shaped 6-room house with two stories. The main change the owner made on the first floor was to convert the back porch into a long narrow kitchen. That was very satisfactory except for the outside appearance of the house. We drew an alternate plan for a larger kitchen and next to it a workroom and a more direct entrance to the basement.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And you located the bathroom downstairs by the bedroom instead of on the second floor as the owner did.

MR. ASHBY: Yes, in a farmhouse a first-floor bathroom is generally more useful. Either of these plans is very good for remodeling this type of house. The owner's cash expenditures was \$850, not counting his own work. This included a new bathroom, the kitchen, and a heating plant. The cost of carrying out our plan would have been somewhat higher, but it would have provided some additional conveniences.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Now, for a northern farmhouse, Mr. Ashby, what's your pick of the plans? Or have you a favorite in that group?

MR. ASHBY: Yes, this pioneer Wisconsin farmhouse, No. 12 in the bulletin, we think is pretty good. It shows what a young man and his wife were able to get in return for a small amount of cash and a large amount of their own thought and labor. They took this old six-room house built back in 1854 and added four rooms, a cellar, a garage, a bathroom, and lots of other conveniences. They even started out with a wooden house and ended up with one veneered with stone, salvaged from an old abandoned house in the neighborhood. All lumber was cut and sawed on their own farm. The cash cost of the whole job was only about \$1,500, but the house is insured for \$4,000.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Miss Van Deman, and Mr. Ashby I'm sorry to interrupt you. I'm sure you could keep right on for 18 not 8 minutes telling us interesting things about these plans for modernizing farmhouses. But I'll have to call time on you now, and let anybody who is interested write in for this excellent new bulletin. The number is Farmers' Bulletin 1749 and the title is "Modernizing Farmhouses".

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